



Mayslake Peabody Estate, 31st St. & Rt. 83, Oak Brook, IL
www.firstfolio.org

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Will Rogers Comes to Oak Brook ***One-man Show Pays Homage to Great Cowboy Philosopher***

OAK BROOK – The indoor portion of First Folio’s Season of Invention concludes with the world premiere of *Will Rogers: An American Original*, written and performed by 3-time Jeff nominee Kevin McKillip. This one-man show explores the life and times of America’s most popular humorist.

At the time of his death in 1935, Will Rogers hosted the number one radio show in America, had a daily column that ran in over 400 papers, and was the number one male box office star for three years running. In the course of a career that included both Texas Jack’s Wild West Show and the Ziegfeld Follies, Will Rogers invented the American stand-up comic. Using his trick roping skills to punctuate his delivery, Will Rogers’ folksy humor set the groundwork for everyone from Bob Hope to Johnny Carson to David Letterman.

Will was born on a ranch near the town of Oologah in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). His mother was 1/4 Cherokee and his father 3/8 Cherokee and Will used to say, “I never got far enough in arithmetic to figure out what that made me.”

His observations on government, the economy, and society are as timely now as when he first made them. On his political affiliations: “I’m not a member of any organized political party. I’m a Democrat.” Of the Stock Market Crash: “If stupidity got us into this mess, then why can’t it get us out?” Concerning taxes: “The Republicans now, they are accusing the Democrats of raising taxes. This upsets the Republicans because if Democrats do most of the tax raising, the Republicans do most of the tax paying.”

Famous for the statement, “I never met a man I didn’t like,” Will Rogers is the quintessential image of the common man.

This production marks Kevin McKillip’s 20th show with First Folio, but is his first outing both as a writer and as the star of a one-man show. Last seen as Gussie Fink-Nottle in *Jeeves in Bloom*, Kevin’s previous First Folio appearances also include three Jeff nominated roles: Eustace Bassington-Bassington in *Jeeves Intervenes*, the title role in *Richard III*, and Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He returns to the Chicago stage following four months at Door County’s Peninsula Players, where his roles included Phileas Fogg in *Around the World in 80 Days* and the painter Francois Millet in *Is He Dead?* Kevin has appeared with numerous Chicago area theaters including the Goodman (*The Story*), Court (*Arcadia*), and Famous Door (*Early and Often* and *Ghetto*), and he spent a year with the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada.

Alison C. Vesely, Artistic Director and Co-Founder of First Folio, is once again at the helm of this production. *Will Rogers* is Alison’s 28th show with First Folio; previous productions include last

spring's *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, which earned her a Jeff nomination for Best Director, as well as being honored with three other nominations, including Best Production.

All performances take place on the grounds of the Mayslake Peabody Estate, which is owned and operated by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. Indoor shows are presented in Mayslake Hall, a 30-room Tudor Revival style mansion originally built by coal baron Francis S. Peabody. Completed in 1922, the mansion is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Located at 31st St. and Rt. 83 in Oak Brook, First Folio is easy to get to from either the East-West Tollway (I-88) or the Stevenson Expressway (I-55).

First Folio Theatre is supported in part by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and The DuPage Community Foundation.

Performance schedule is attached.

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WILL ROGERS : *An American Original*

Written and Performed by Kevin McKillip
Based on the life and writings of Will Rogers

Previews: March 31, April 1, 2 @ 8:00
Opening Night: April 3 @ 8:00
Runs: March 31 – May 2
Performance Times: Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays @ 8:00
Sunday matinees @ 3:00
Tickets: \$28-30 adults, \$23-25 Students/Seniors (Previews \$18)
Box Office: 630-986-8067

Cast

Will Rogers Kevin McKillip*⁺

Production Staff

Director Alison C. Vesely⁺, SDC
Stage Manager David Rice*⁺
Scenic Design Angie Miller⁺
Lighting Design Michael McNamara⁺, USA

* = Member Actor's Equity Association + = Artistic Associate of First Folio Theatre