

# Geoffrey Kent scores role 26 years in the making | John Moore

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When the Denver Center announced the casting for its recent production of “Much Ado About Nothing,” there was some ado about one thing: Denver native Geoffrey Kent’s selection as the romantic hero, Benedick. That just doesn’t happen every day.

Kent, a graduate of Centaurus High School in Lafayette, got his start at the Denver Center teaching classes in 1996 and broke through as an actor playing a small role in "Hamlet" in 2002. Over time, he established himself more as a certified stage-combat expert. In 2016, he became just the 18th certified "Fight Master" with the Society of American Fight Directors, the largest organization of stage combatants in the world.

Along the way, he's landed many small roles in DCPA Theatre Company plays, which is a big deal for any local actor without New York experience or conservatory training. Kent didn't go to college. He went to class, which was in whatever theater he was working at that day. From the start, Kent absorbed everything, learning by watching. And he got really good at acting, especially Shakespeare. He became one of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival's most popular company members over 14 consecutive summers. In 2015, he won his first True West Award for his portrayal of Iago in "Othello."



Kent continued to act, direct and teach firearm safety for regional theaters and universities all over the country while also amassing Denver Center credits including "Richard III," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Lord of the Flies." In 2015, he became an assistant director for "As You Like It," and a year later took another big leap when he was selected to direct "Hand to God" for the Denver Center's Galleria Theatre.

But despite the steady rise of this self-taught, modern-day Horatio Alger, one thing was missing: He had never played a leading role on a Denver Center stage. That is, until Grady Soapes, the director of casting and artistic producer, put him up for Benedick — and Director Chris Coleman agreed.

Benedick is a charmer who engages in a skirmish of wit with the equally fast-talking Beatrice. They are a couple that is meant to be together, if they would only shut up long enough to fall in love. Kent "brings a sly and game physical energy" to the role," Lisa Kennedy wrote for The Denver Post. She called him a likable goofball with nimble comic timing.

Kent's milestone moment was one of the feel-good stories of the local theater year. It was both a culmination and an affirmation for a self-made local actor finally making it on the biggest stage in Denver. But it was something for all Denver-based actors to celebrate as well. His ascension was one that many others aspire to, and serves as tangible proof that it really can happen.

## Geoff Kent's 2022

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- Director: Arvada Center's "The Liar," described by reviewer Alex Miller as "a wickedly clever blast of mirth and mayhem."
- Director, the Aurora Fox's "The Jedi Handbook," playing through Dec. 18
- Actor, Benedick, DCPA Theatre Company's "Much Ado About Nothing"
- Fight Director, University of South Carolina's "Romeo and Juliet"
- Fight Director, DCPA Theatre Company's "Quixote Nuevo"
- Actor, "Rubicon," a staged reading at the Colorado New Play Summit
- Teacher, Shakespeare class at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley
- Teacher, Firearms safety, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Santa Fe Opera
- Fight Choreographer, Asolo Theatre's upcoming "The Three Musketeers" (Sarasota, Fla.)

*Note: The True West Awards, now in their 22nd year, began as the Denver Post Ovation Awards in 2001. Denver Gazette Senior Arts Journalist John Moore celebrates the Colorado theater community by revisiting 30 of the best stories from the past year without categories or nominations.*

### **Catch up on the 2022 True West Awards (to date):**

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- Day 1: Maggie Whittum, stroke survivor
- Day 2: "Flyin' West," Firehouse Theatre and 5280 Artist Co-op
- Day 3: The Parasol Patrol
- Day 4: Motus Theater's 'UndocuAmerica Monologues'