Amidst chaos, confusion, and war with Americans, a community of Nicaraguans was able to share their culture, their stories and their lives with one American who was willing to listen. "El Payaso" invites the audience on the journey of an incredible man and the extraordinary people with whom he unexpectedly connected. Told through the eyes of a young Latino making the journey thirty years later, as he encounters the people who are still carrying on the work in Nicaragua, sharing their vibrant and dynamic memories that the community will never forget, stories that solidify the message on Linder’s headstone, "La luz que encendió brillará para siempre". The light he lit will shine forever.

This ecodrama follows the journey of Elías, working on his environmental science degree, heading to Nicaragua for a chance to make a difference in small rural villages. His journey honors the work of the late Ben Linder, who brought electricity to villages in Nicaragua and also shared his talents of clowning. Ben’s memory lives on in the work of Clowns without Borders and various environmental groups that are collaborating to bring this story to life. With red noses and humor, the performers will share the value of “thinking globally, while acting locally.”

In 1987 Ben Linder was killed by Contras in Nicaragua, during a war that was fueled by the Reagan administration of the United States. For the 30th anniversary of Ben’s passing, this play will share with a new generation, an inspirational story of one idealist who saw the potential of art and science to help save the world, one small village at a time.

El Payaso is steadfast in its message, but it’s also plenty goofy. It doesn’t take itself too seriously, but it doesn’t back down from its message, either. – Shannon Gormley, Willamette Week

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