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over, while Slabinski, Hull and Dante must keep the audience up to speed on who's who while coming on and offstage depicting a revolving lineup of more than 35 supporting characters.

The iconic duo

To reincarnate Sherlock Holmes — who holds a Guinness World Records title for “Most Portrayed Literary Human Character in Film & TV” — Jagodnik studied the mannerisms and character choices made by well-known actors who depicted the iconic sleuth, but he is also relying on his own interpretation and instincts.

“You have to go with what you have,” he said. “It’s you doing it, it’s your voice, it’s your body. You can’t be Jeremy Brett, even though you want to be. You can’t be Basil Rathbone or Benedict Cumberbatch.”

For Watson, Sweeney is focused on two watchwords: chronicler and observer.

“Much of what I try to do is respond to what’s going on around me, more reactive than proactive,” he said.

In “Baskerville,” Watson

and Sherlock already have an established friendship and professional partnership, which is the heart of the show.

“Their relationship is the key to everything they do,” Tronier said. “They’re yin and yang. They complement each other so well and would do anything for each other. Especially in Victorian-era London, it’s cool they had such a strong friendship.”

On his face, Sherlock is

not a particularly endearing character — he’s addicted to drugs and smoking, can be volatile and has sociopathic tendencies. Watson, however, “sees the humanity in him, he sees the brilliance, the mind,” Tronier said. Sherlock’s “wicked habits,” which are referred to in the play, help bring him down a notch.

“Because Sherlock is flawed, he’s more relatable,” she said. “If he was just this brilliant detective who was a nice guy, I don’t think people would like him as much, because there wouldn’t be a relatable aspect to him.”

Jagodnik and Sweeney emphasize the importance of artfully portraying the co-dependence and loyalty between the detective and his sidekick, whose relationship has served as a template for other buddy cop duos for more than a century.

Like a musical (without the singing)

For the other three actors, the focus is breadth rather than depth. During the start of the rehearsal process, they individually met with Tronier to discuss each of their individual characters and conceptualize how that person would talk and move, or what idiosyncrasies could define them.

“I encouraged them to explore physically, as well as vocally,” Tronier said.

While the costumes Judith Light has created for each character will help evoke and distinguish them, the onus is on the actors to endow each one with a different voice or accent, physical characteristic or other mannerisms.

“There are a couple scenes where each of us are playing two different characters in the same scene



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From left: Slab Slabinski, David Sweeney, Frank Jagodnik and Emily Dante star in ‘Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery’ at the Coaster Theatre.



Emily Dante, left, and Ryan Hull on the Coaster Theatre stage in ‘Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery’



Coaster Theatre actors (from left) David Sweeney, Slab Slabinski, Frank Jagodnik in ‘Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery’


and even speaking two lines back-to-back as different characters,” Slabinski said.

Some characters make a single appearance in a short scene; others weave their presence throughout the show’s approximately 30 scenes. From an audience perspective, Dante said, “you really have no idea who’s going to pop out from behind the curtain.”

The challenge for the whole cast and crew is to embrace the absurd moments, but also maintain sincerity. Contrary to popular belief, melodrama is accomplished not through “overacting” but exhibiting heightened emotions,

Tronier said, adding, “It’s very much like a musical, without the singing.” While the script could lend itself to “just being silly,” Tronier said, the show would lack depth and emotion.

“The task that was given to them — especially the three actors — was to ground those characters in reality, give them real emotions,” she said. “They have to be real, because the more real they are, the funnier they’ll actually be.”

Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Visit coastertheatre.com for a full show and event calendar, or call the Coaster Theatre box office at 503-436-1242 for tickets. 

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