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## Time Travel, Online Blogs and Music Collide in New Theatre Production

Winthrop University

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### Quick Facts

- Show times are 8 p.m. Feb. 6-9 and 2 p.m. Feb. 10.
- Tickets are \$5 Wednesday and Thursday with a Winthrop ID or \$10 to the public.
- Saturday and Sunday tickets are \$10 with a Winthrop ID and \$15 to the public.



*Long, Calabro and Patel*

ROCK HILL, S.C. — A teacher scandal posted on an online blog propels three young misfits on a time-shifting and odd journey to get what they want in “**Speech and Debate**,” the newest production from **Winthrop University’s Department of Theatre and Dance** opening Feb. 6 in **Johnson Theatre**.

The student-directed production is a coming-of-age dark comedy that mixes in high-energy music and dance numbers, time-traveling, a young Abraham Lincoln, pilgrims and George Michael.

“With the small musical scenes, dance number and socially awkward teenagers, I think ‘**Speech and Debate**’ is reminiscent of John Hughes movies such as ‘The Breakfast Club’ and ‘Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,’” said director **Sean Johnson**, a theatre major from Anderson, S.C.

Written by playwright Stephen Karam, “Speech and Debate” follows students Solomon, Diwata and Howie. The three don’t know each other exist until Howie posts information about a teacher scandal on Diwata’s online blog. Solomon is eager to expose the story in the student newspaper. Eager to form a speech and debate team, Diwata convinces the two to join the team.

Though Johnson has directed a one-act play in the past, this is his first full-length play, and he said the material is relevant to young students.

“Even though it is about a group of high school students, the play explores the state of being between adolescence and adulthood, childish naiveté and grown-up boldness,” he said. “I think those themes are definitely something college students can relate to. It’s a trio of young people who are not only misfits, but generally unlikeable, and Stephen Karam’s honest writing fully fleshes them out and makes them relevant and likeable.”

Rehearsals and pre-production have been a “fast train,” he added, but the talented cast—featuring **Jonathan Long** as Howie, **Ann Marie Calabro** as Diwata and **Shivam Patel** as Solomon—have tackled the script and oddball characters.

“Speech and Debate” show times at Feb.6-9 at 8 p.m. with a matinee Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5 Wednesday and Thursday with a Winthrop ID and \$10 to the public. For the Friday-Sunday shows, tickets are \$8 with a Winthrop ID and \$15 to the public. It is a cultural event.

For tickets visit the box office in Johnson Hall, call the box office at 803/323-4014 or purchase tickets online.

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