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Department of Theatre and Dance's New Play Takes on Matthew Shepard Tragedy

Winthrop University

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Quick Facts

- "The Laramie Project" tells the story of the after-effects of the Matthew Shepard tragedy through real-life interviews.
- Show times are Oct 24-27 at 8 p.m. with a 2 p.m. showing Oct. 28.



The Laramie Project

ROCK HILL, S.C. — Winthrop University's [Department of Theatre and Dance](#) tackles the tragic case of **Matthew Shepard** in "**The Laramie Project**," opening Wednesday, Oct. 24 in [Johnson Theatre](#).

In October 1998, two men abducted 21-year-old Shepard, a college student who was openly gay, and severely beat him, leaving him tied to a fence outside of Laramie, Wyoming. Shepard was found by a passing cyclist and died a few days later.

"**The Laramie Project**" is the result of more than 200 interviews conducted by Moises Kaufman's Tectonic Theatre Project with the people of Laramie. The interviews capture the residents' fascinating reactions to the crime, transforming them into a moving collage that effectively demonstrates both cruelty and compassion in human nature.

The production has been a hands-on learning process for fine arts students as well: the production is **entirely student-directed, -designed and -produced**.

Director Allison Zobel said the preparation has been more than anyone would think. The theatre major chose the play last year and worked for months on a proposal, telling theatre faculty why she wanted to do the play and what her vision entailed. The experience has been both exciting and scary, she said.

"We look to our faculty advisers a lot for support, but we all had to learn how to better communicate ideas and opinions to each other and work really hard to make sure that all of the design elements and acting created one, cohesive vision," she said. "I personally have learned several communication skills through working with my crew, designers and actors as well as learned how to ask for what I want or need and be more decisive with my decision-making."

Calling her staff talented and great to work with, Zobel and the crew created a mission statement for the production. The statement begins with sharing Shepard's story and causing the audience to think.

"We often times don't realize the extremes that hate can take us to," she said. "**I hope that with this production, at least one audience member will leave with a change of heart and a new-found determination to take a stance against hate and hate crimes.**"

Show times are Oct 24-27 at 8 p.m. with a 2 p.m. showing Oct. 28. Tickets are \$5 with a Winthrop ID or \$10 to the general public on Oct. 24 and 25. Friday-Sunday, tickets are \$8 with a Winthrop ID and \$15 to the general public. It is a cultural event.

Tickets may be purchased at the box office between 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Friday. Call the box office at 803/323-4014 or e-mail at boxoffice@winthrop.edu.

For more information about Matthew Shepard visit [the Matthew Shepard Foundation website](#).

[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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Accessibility	Calendars	Emergency/Safety	Financial Aid	Online Learning (Graduate)	Visit the Campus
Alumni & Friends	Directions	Employment	Library	Records & Registration	Visitors Center
Arts	Directory	Family Programs	Majors & More	Residence Life	Wingspan