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Morris Theatre Discipline Travels Back to Laramie, Wyoming

Summary: The University of Minnesota, Morris Theatre Discipline opens its 2012-13 season with The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later.

(October 24, 2012)-The University of Minnesota, Morris Theatre Discipline opens its 2012-13 season with *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, the gripping sequel to the original play by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project that was performed at Morris in 2002. Ray Schultz, associate professor of theatre arts and director of *The Laramie Project*, directs this highly acclaimed sequel that delves further into the tragedy and continued speculation surrounding the murder of twenty-one-year-old Matthew Shepard, a gay man and University of Wyoming student.

Schultz admits to being drawn to the piece by its ensemble acting and overtly theatrical style, but the choice to mount it simply made sense, given the timing. “We had done *The Laramie Project* back in 2002,” he notes, “and when I became aware of the sequel, I thought it was a logical progression for the theatre discipline to produce the follow-up play.” Furthermore, Schultz believes that that one of theatre’s important purposes is to stimulate conversation on issues that affect us. “It’s not exactly a coincidence that we will be producing a play just days before the November election that deals, in part, with an issue that’s currently on the Minnesota ballot,” he says.

Additional University faculty and staff assisting Schultz in the production process are Tap Payne, professor of theatre arts and lighting designer, Merlin Peterson, guest professor of theatre and set designer, Liz Spohr, costume shop and publicity office supervisor and costume designer, and Nick Mompier, scene shop supervisor and technical director.

Lening depth and sincerity to the production is a cast of eighteen actors—“a talented ensemble of students from very diverse backgrounds,” according to Schultz. The cast includes Daniel Bisgaard ’15, John Bliss ’13, Kathleen Corpron ’16, Silvio Defant ’16, Ian Donahue ’13, Mitch Finzel, Kari Hanson ’14, Manilan Houle ’16, Lindy Jackson ’15, Jared Jon Jerzak ’16, Sydney Long ’16, George/Anne Meyers-Welsch ’13, Jonas Newhouse ’16, Emily Ramstad ’15, Luciana Ranelli ’14, Julie Renner ’14, Luis Rey Reyes ’14, Tyler Ruter ’16, and Aleksander B.T. Sievert ’13.

Completing their senior projects through the production are Donahue (cast member), Collin Ireland ’13 (projection designer), and Andrew Turbiville ’12 (stage manager). Additional members of the crew include Gardner Brenneisen ’15 and Deon Haider ’14 (assistant stage managers) Sarah Hanson ’15 and Charlotte Raeker ’15 (assistant costume designers), Stevie Johnson ’13 (projection assistant), Matt McDonough ’15 (sound designer), Brian Mitchell ’16 (assistant sound designer), Will Segrest ’15 (props designer), Evan Sima ’15 (light board operator), and Micayla Thebault-Spieker ’14 (assistant light designer). Madie Kvale ’14 serves as the production’s dramaturg.

The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later will be performed on Thursday, November 1, at 7:30 p.m., Friday, November 2, at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday, November 3, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in the Humanities Fine Arts Black Box Theatre. Tickets—\$8 for general admission and \$5 for students and senior citizens—are available through the Theatre Box Office at thrupub@morris.umn.edu or 320-589-6249. Discount rates are available for groups over six.

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