

Laramie Project brings emotion to stage

by Cassidy Scott

My initial feeling when entering the Osterman Theatre at Clackamas Community College was one of awkwardness.

The Laramie Project, a play based on the 1998 murder of homosexual college student Matthew Shepard, brings a darker and more mature theme to the CCC theatre department.

Coming to see the winter production of The Laramie Project, a day after opening night, I thought the theater would be full and loud in anticipation. However, upon my entrance into the theater, I knew this would not be the case with only about 25 or 30 people in attendance.

As I waited for it to start in the quiet auditorium, I couldn't help but be impressed with the set. The utility poles, which lined the main stage, were actual poles donated to the show. The crew even went the extra mile by slinging an old pair of tennis shoes around one of the wires. A tumbleweed sat in the middle of the stage. With the quietness of the theater and the excellent set, I really felt as though we were about to be transported to rural Wyoming over the next couple hours.

Then the show started. At first, I was a little con-

fused. The Laramie Project is fast paced, with new characters coming out to speak every few minutes. It took a while to adjust to this pace and format, but once I did it became refreshing and interesting. To keep things clear, there was also a large screen against the back of the stage to tell the audience which "moment" the cast was portraying.

Each cast member played multiple characters, each with different accents and backstories. They did wonderfully. Overall, the transitions between characters were seamless. Just by adding glasses, a sweater and a new accent, a cast member transformed into a new character. The only accent I felt a little distracting was the flamboyant gay accent, because I couldn't pay attention to what he was saying due to the combination of his over-the-top accent and fabulous sweater. However, the accent mix up of the cast at large did keep it exciting and interesting to say the least.

Similarly, because of the movements of all the different characters, the transitions between scenes were like a dance. The choreography was obviously well-practiced, with each person being exactly where they needed to be onstage.

With the addition of long and sometimes complex

lines, it is needless to say I was very, very impressed with the caliber of professionalism of the cast and crew.

It was obvious the cast was involved in the story and wanted to give their all to Matthew Shepard and the story of Laramie. The acting was really top-notch.

My favorite performance of the night came from Clackamas Community College student Sam Levi, whose great acting, accents and overall emotion were marvelous.

Without giving away spoilers, my favorite and most moving scene of the play came with him and a speech his character delivered. The emotion behind it made it clear that Sam felt for the story; the tears and emotion he delivered on stage had me tearing up in the audience. And I wasn't alone, as I saw plenty of tears rolling down multiple other cheeks.

The Laramie Project is a special play. It wasn't what I was expecting, but in the end I really appreciated that. As the small crowd left the theater, I couldn't help but feel like we were all now connected after the experience.

If you haven't seen it yet, you really need to consider it. Performances continue in the Osterman Theatre through Sunday.



Susan McKenna, from left, Anastasia Gianopoulos and Sam Levi act out a scene.



Marisa Peralta portrays Rebecca Hilliker, Aaron Kreifels and a reporter throughout the play.



Sam Levi, from left, Rico Starr and Jack Eikrem each play multiple characters in the production.