

LOBBY HERO HITS STAGE

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In society, the line between right and wrong can at times be as grey as Oregon's skies mid November. With so many issues in today's world, and with so many people telling us what is good and what is bad, it can be hard to properly calibrate one's moral compass.

"Lobby Hero," the fall play being staged at Clackamas Community College beginning this week, seeks to shed light on this very strife that all encounter at one point or another.

Written by Kenneth Lonergan and adapted to an off-Broadway production in 2001, "Lobby Hero" tells the tale of a hapless hotel lobby security guard who can't seem to catch a break. Previously thrown out of the U.S. Navy for smoking a joint on the job, Jeff, played by student actor Matt Cornett, has been struggling to keep his job whilst under the thumb of his strict supervisor William, portrayed by student actor Chrishawn West.

The plot thickens early on as we learn that William's brother has been detained along with several other suspects due to the heinous crime of murder. This sets

in motion a slew of events that brings in the other badge-wearing and law-abiding half of this four-person act, portrayed by student actor Emma Beckers and actor Rich Cohn-Lee.

"Part of it has to do with some social issues that we see a lot in today's culture," Cornett said. "Like the Black Lives Matter movement. It's really interesting because this play was actually written in 2001, so it's way ahead of its time. It's a really interesting centerpiece to focus that kind of energy on."

The dialogue-intensive script allows for numerous amusing and charming back and forths between the lackey and his boss, with the lesser constantly having to explain his constant turmoil and the latter reminding his subordinate that life takes a sturdy head to navigate. William can not always remain stoic though, as the investigation of his brother's incarceration progressively chips away at his mentality throughout the duration of the play, which has a drastic impact on the interaction between Jeff and William.

West has been pursuing both

screenwriting and filmmaking during his tenure at CCC, and thanks to his communications teacher Alice Lewis nudging him towards the theater on the day of auditions, he was given the opportunity to act on stage for his first time since high school.

"It was different; it was nerve-racking," West said. "I didn't know [the cast] and they have more experience in acting than I do, so I was the underdog and I was trying to catch up with them. After like the third week I started getting more comfortable working around them."

Though West said that playing a lead role took some calibrating, his performance was unnoticeable as he melded perfectly with the other three members of the cast. West said he had to adapt to his part even more so than others because of his homosexuality and aloof nature served as a barrier to William's heterosexual, stern personality.

"Playing a heterosexual man was very different, and taking on the role of being masculine and being a macho heterosexual man at that was very different," West

said. "Getting angry especially. Because most of the time I'm a happy-go-lucky person unless you make me mad, but getting angry for no reason was super hard."

The sole set of the play takes the form of a beautifully constructed hotel lobby where William and Jeff spend their time, with police officer Bill and his partner Dawn cycling in and out of throughout the play.

Bill is a long-serving member of the force, and is on track to being awarded the occupation of detective. This praise seems to have gone to his head, as Bill often abuses his power for personal gain. His partner Dawn is a rookie, and an overzealous one at that. When we first encounter the pair, Bill is explaining to Dawn that it was well within in her right to strike and knockout a drunk and disorderly man who approached Dawn with less than savory intentions. This tells the audience right away that Dawn does not appreciate the notion of being walked over, and few would be tempted to try.

I'm still adjusting. There's still some stuff that I'm still figuring out with her character and that really connects with actual people



Chrishawn West, left, portrays William who struggles with his brother's recent incarceration throughout the play. Jeff, right, is portrayed by Matt Cornett and serves as the plays protagonist. Throughout the narrative he struggles to break free from the mistakes of his past.

