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STETSON UNIVERSITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stetson University Theatre Arts Combats Homophobia in ‘The Laramie Project’

DELAND, Florida, Nov. 7, 2019 – [Stetson Theatre Arts](#) presents Moisés Kaufman’s searing drama “The Laramie Project,” directed by Julie Schmitt, PhD, Creative Arts Department chair and director and associate professor of theatre arts at [Stetson University](#). The play is a theatrical examination of a city’s response to a brutal murder, and will run from Nov. 21-24 at Stetson University’s Second Stage Theatre, located at the [Museum of Art – DeLand](#).

In October 1998, Matthew Shepard, a student at the University of Wyoming, was kidnapped, severely beaten and left tied to a prairie fence. Shepard was the target of a vicious assault because he was gay and he died days later as a result of his injuries.

Kaufman and fellow members of the Tectonic Theater Project conducted more than 200 interviews with residents of Laramie, Wyoming. The play is comprised of those first-hand accounts collected by the theatre company.

“The play’s rehearsal and design process have been really unique and rewarding,” said Schmitt. “Since a number of actors are playing well over eight parts, I have asked them to think of their different characters in relation to a long list of archetypal characters, and we’re working on finding different ways to embody those archetypes through physical and vocal characterization. It’s a challenge, but the students are up for it, and it’s clear that this play means a lot to them.”

“The Laramie Project” showcases a tragedy that is disturbingly prevalent today.

“Even though it has been more than 20 years since the death of Matthew Shepard, there are many moments in the play that really resonate with me and with fellow cast members,” said Schmitt. “I feel that discussions about hate, empathy and compassion will always be relevant, and the play certainly feels as though it is of this time.”

Experience “The Laramie Project,” a breathtaking collage that explores the depths to which humanity can sink and the heights of compassion of which we are capable.

Production alert: The play contains mature subject matter and language and may not be suitable for all ages.

Ensemble cast: Shay Figueroa (Narrator); Javell Francis (Detective Rob Debree); Reed Barkowitz (Marge Murray); Aliyah Bendix (Alison Mears); Noah Belachew (Matt Galloway); Kiara Santiago (Romaine Patterson); Abiola Adebajo (Officer Reggie Fluty); Joshua Dennis

(Phillip Dubois); Matthew Heid (Dennis Shepard); Joshua Camden (Doc O'Connor); Hope Willberger (Aaron Kreifels); and Logan Castaneda (Andrew Gomez).

Where: Second Stage Theatre at the Museum of Art – DeLand, 600 N. Woodland Blvd., DeLand (adjacent to the DeLand campus)

When: 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 21, Friday, Nov. 22 and Saturday, Nov. 23 and 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 24

Admission: \$12 adults, \$10 seniors and non-Stetson students (including area schools and colleges), Stetson faculty, staff and students receive free admission with a valid ID

Parking: Free

Box office, reservations and more information: 386-822-8700

Tickets will be available at the door and reserved tickets must be picked up 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. The box office will be open one hour prior to curtain.

About Stetson University

Founded in 1883, [Stetson University](#) is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson focuses on intense learning experiences in a supportive community that allows students to develop their voice in a connected, inclusive environment. Stetson University ranks No. 5 on U.S. News & World Report's 2019 list of Best Regional Universities (South), and has been recognized as one of The Princeton Review's 385 Best Colleges, 2020 edition. [Stay connected](#) with Stetson on social media.

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