Laramie on display at Creighton

Visual Arts and Theatre combine to present “The Laramie Project.”

By JEFF PEAK
Head Copy Editor

Alan Klem, director of the upcoming play “The Laramie Project,” has adopted a saying during recent rehearsals to give his actors direction with their performances.

“Just trust the words.”

No overacting is necessary to make this show larger than life, no dramatic movement is required in the staging of the show. “Just trust the words.”

Laramie, Wyo., a small town of about 27,000, was thrust into the media spotlight with the beating of Matthew Shepard on Oct. 7, 1998.

When the media swarmed into town, everybody had a story to tell, their words filling the national airwaves.

Moises Kaufman and his group, the Tectonic Theatre Project, heard these words and spent three years interviewing the people of Laramie, transforming these interviews and stories into “The Laramie Project.”

The hardest thing about the show is that these people are real people, these are their words, we have a responsibility to say them exactly as they are,” said cast member Rachel Mans, Arts & Sciences freshman.

Klem agreed.

“The people are real. You can do a search on the Internet and find that they are still there,” he said. “We’re just the third party of this whole thing. We are portraying the Tectonic Theatre Project, who portrayed real people. Our cast is playing actors who are playing real people.”

One person interviewed by the Tectonic Theatre Project was Rulon Stacey, the president and CEO of the Poudre Valley Health System. In the Creighton show, Stacey, played by Adam Karnik, makes the statement, “I didn’t understand the magnitude with which some people hate.”

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Rulon Stacey
Played by Adam Karnik in “The Laramie Project”

The play simply addresses the negative repercussions of hate.

“It’s not so much about a crime against a gay person, although that’s part of it,” said Klem. “But it’s also as Moises Kaufman said, it’s not as much about Matthew Shepard, but about Laramie, Wyo.”

“Just trust the words.”

The Rev. Michael Flecky, S.J., had a chance to take photographs of Laramie for use in the production. Though the buck fence that Matthew Shepard was tied to has since been removed, it was still a somber experience for Flecky.

“I was there, I was there by myself, it was a little sobering, also kind of lonely,” Flecky said. “I couldn’t help but think that the place that I was standing — the last thing that Matthew Shepard had seen — was this view of Wyoming.”

Though the script doesn’t call for the use of pictures in the staging of the show, Klem felt that having a slideshow of images projected behind the stage would add to the experience.

“Sometimes a picture speaks a thousand words. In the guidance of a really capable photographer like Michael Flecky, it can really be really dramatic,” Klem said. “His images speak as loudly as the images in the script.”

“The Laramie Project” can be seen Wednesday through Feb. 24, at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 25 at 2 p.m. in the Studio Theatre at the Lied Education Center for the Arts.

Tickets are $5 for staff and students, $10 for general admission.

The Gay Straight Alliance will sponsor a forum and question and answer session after Wednesday night’s show.