

Play searches for answers in death

By Heather Panetta
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ten years after the murder of Matthew Shepard, residents of Laramie, Wyo. still cannot decide what happened: Was Shepard's death at the hands of two men a hate crime, or a robbery gone wrong?

The Tectonic Theater Project sought to answer these questions and more last night in "The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later, An Epilogue" at Eisenhower Auditorium.

The play is a sequel to "The Laramie Project," which focused on townspeople's reactions to Shepard's death. On Oct. 6, 1998, Shepard was beaten and tied to a fence by two men he met at a bar. He later died from his injuries.

Witnesses during the men's trial said that Shepard was attacked because he was gay.

"The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later" revisits the town on the 10th anniversary of the murder.

The play begins on Sept. 12, 2008, one month before the anniversary, and is based off of interviews conducted by members of the Tectonic Theater Project. The members returned to talk with residents, family

members, and the murderers themselves to see how things have changed. The eight actors in the play reenacted the interviews they conducted.

One of the main issues that still dominates the minds of Laramie residents today is whether Shepard's death was indeed a hate crime or a botched robbery. While those close to Shepard believe it was a hate crime, other residents in their interviews said they had heard that it was a robbery fueled by drugs. The editor of the Laramie Boomerang, the town's main paper, was one of those residents. For the anniversary, the paper ran a short series on the death. In her interview, the editor said she believed that the murderers wanted money and didn't think that it was about Shepard's sexuality.

Three of the most shocking interviews in the play were of the murderers, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, and Judy Shepard, Matthew's mother.

In his interview, McKinney admitted that although he regrets that he didn't live the way his dad taught him to, as far as Shepard was concerned he had no remorse. McKinney said that he had heard Shepard was a sex predator who preyed on young



Andrew Dunheimer/Collegian

After a performance of "The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later," actors, including Amy Vashaw, left, answered questions.

guys and that he needed to be killed.

Judy Shepard said in her interview that she has a lot more anger now than she did then because crimes like this are still happening and there is still much to be done.

Jorge Valdes (graduate-Spanish) said he remembers Shepard's story and when he heard about the show playing he thought it would be a good opportunity to see it.

"I was shocked and taken aback," Valdes said. "I expected things to have changed in a different way."

And Rhonda McClain (graduate-psychology) said the play was extremely powerful in raising awareness about this issue.

"There were very powerful moments of intense emotions like anger and sadness," McClain said.

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Peruvian author awarded Nobel

Hilal Italle
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW YORK — New winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, has never found much honor in boundaries.

"Literature shouldn't be secluded, provincial or regional," the Peruvian author said in New York after Thursday's announcement in Sweden. "It should be universal, even if it has deep roots in one place."

The 74-year-old author and political activist is a charter member of the Latin American literary boom of the 1960s.

He has for decades been regarded as one of the world's greatest and most adventurous writers.

He is considered an unpredictable and provocative mixer of literature and social consciousness in both his work and his life.

Artists are born dissenters - often, but not always, of the left. Like such recent Nobelists as Herta Mueller and Doris Lessing, Vargas Llosa is a dissenter from communism, a former party member who ran for president of Peru in 1990 as an advocate of privatization and remains a critic of leftist leaders such as Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.

The author of more than 30 novels, plays and works of non-fiction, he is known for his expansive language, his alertness to the profound and the profane, and his fierce and dark disdain for tyranny.

His books are not without magical touches, but he is more grounded, more a "realist" than fellow Nobel laureate and South American Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Associated Press writers Karl Ritter, Malin Rising and Louise Nordstrom in Stockholm; Daniel Woolls in Madrid; Carla Salazar in Lima, Peru; Frank Bajak in Bogota, Colombia; and Verena Dobnik and Ana Elena Azpurua in New York contributed to this report.

Renowned poet shares work, life stories

By Lauren Ingeno
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Jane Hirshfield told a full audience on Thursday night that she often thinks about how many great writers there must be in the world that no one ever hears about.

Fortunately for her fans at Penn State, Hirshfield's poetry has gained international attention and she is able to share her talent with many.

Selected as Penn State's 2010 Emily Dickinson Lecturer, which is sponsored by the Department of English, Hirshfield gave a poetry reading and book signing at Foster Auditorium.

The poet is the author of six books of poems, including "After," which was named the "best book of 2006" by six different news publications and was a finalist for England's T.S. Eliot Award.

Hirshfield began her reading with various selections of her published poems and ended with poems from her new volume of poetry, which has yet to be published.

Between poems, Hirshfield told the audience anecdotal stories about the origins and aftermaths of her poems, including how many of her poems have often been literally and figuratively lost in translation.

"I wrote this at the end of a relationship. Afterwards, a friend told me that she had it read at her wedding, which really startled me," she said with a laugh. "I wrote it when I was in great distress."

And when a translator was translating Hirshfield's poetry into Russian he had trouble with certain words, she said.

"There's no word for 'thirsty' in Russian," she said the translator told her.

This comical story was referenced in a poem Hirshfield read later in her lecture.

The poet said that though much of where her poetry comes from is a mystery, sparks from life often inspire it.

"Life throws you material," she said. "This is not work that can be done on willpower alone."

Sarah Rude (graduate-English) said that she recently had to do a presentation on Hirshfield so she really needed to research her and get a sense of her.

She said that she thinks that Hirshfield is such an engaging poet for not only those who are fans of poetry, but also for those who are new poetry readers.

Rude also said that the reading gave a good range of her work and she liked hearing the poems from Hirshfield's new book that has not yet been released.

"As a reader you're always fol-

lowing behind in a poet's head," Rude said.

"But when you get to hear poems from the poet's past that still resonate with her, as well as the things that she's thinking about now, you get to see the arc of her development."

Matt Walker (graduate-English) said that he also enjoyed Hirshfield's reading.

"I like the way that she seems to navigate between really big ideas and images," Walker said. "And I like the kind of intimacy she gives to objects."

Hirshfield said that she felt privileged that she is able to share and affect others with the way she's spending her life and the discoveries she's making.

"I'm amazed and surprised and it makes me very grateful," she said.

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