

# Student directs 'controversial' play



*Jabin E. Botsford*  
Bowling Green senior Stephen Tabor portrays Alex, the father of a Mormon boy who committed suicide, on Sunday night at a rehearsal of "Facing East" in the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre.

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**Student directs 'controversial' play** Lauren Arnold  
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Ashland junior Joseph Sturgill, the self-proclaimed "problem child" of WKU's theatre department, isn't one to shy away from controversy, especially when it comes to directing.

Sturgill is directing a rendition of "Facing East," a play with controversial subject matter. The play debuted last night, and a second showing begins tonight at 8 p.m. in Gordon Wilson.

"Facing East" was written by Carol Lynn Pearson and takes place at the gravesite of a Mormon boy named Andrew who committed suicide because his family didn't accept his homosexuality, Sturgill said.

The family is coming to terms with their beliefs and the loss of their son after being excommunicated, Sturgill said.

"They basically get black-balled from their families, and they stop communicating with them," he said.

Louisville junior Lusie Cuskey plays Ruth, the boy's mother, who Cuskey called a "very traditional Mormon mother."

Ruth has a difficult time dealing with the death of her son and is deeply hurt by his homosexuality, Cuskey said.

Bowling Green senior Stephen Tabor plays Andrew's father, Alex, who is highly involved in the Mormon church, Tabor said.

Sturgill said that he felt a strong connection to this play after reading it.

He said he feels like Andrew's parents are a lot like his own parents because of his past and the way they deal with problems.

"It shows how much religion plays a part in everyday life," he said.

Sturgill said he hopes this play will change people's lives.

"It's a button-pusher," Sturgill said. "It makes you rethink a lot of things. I'm not the same person that I was before I read this play, and I am definitely not the same person that I was before I started directing it."

Sturgill said the play is a love story, but not in the Valentine's Day sense.

"It's about how everyone deserves a shot at love," he said.

"He's also a very well-known radio personality," Tabor said. "He does a segment called 'One-Minute Dad,' where he teaches dads how to spend quality time with their kids and create a good family environment, which is ironic considering the events in the play."

Throughout the play, Alex deals with guilt and wonders whether his son's suicide is his fault, Tabor said.

About halfway through the play, the family is joined by Andrew's boyfriend, which leads to confrontation, Sturgill said.