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## Deliberation pays off in 'Crime and Punishment' at LCC



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Photo by Kevin Fowler Simon Rebeck as Raskolnikov in Lansing Community College's production of "Crime and Punishment," adapted from the novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

KEVIN W. FOWLER

Posted Wednesday, February 26, 2025 6:44 am

By **CHELSEA LAKE ROBERTS**

If you're a theater nerd like me — and let's face it, here you are — I hope you'll agree that few things are better than watching young talents find their voice under the care of expert guidance. In Lansing Community College's production of "Crime and Punishment," adapted by Marilyn Campbell-Lowe and Curt Columbus from Fyodor Dostoevsky's sprawling novel, we're invited to witness the beautiful deliberateness of young artists mastering their craft.

In case you haven't read one of the most enduring pieces of world literature, here are the CliffsNotes: Destitute student Raskolnikov commits murder to prove his philosophical theories about moral superiority. As he grapples with guilt and faces interrogation from clever inspector Porfiry Petrovitch, he finds unexpected redemption through Sonia, a sex worker. This psychological thriller asks timeless and timely questions that every generation must answer: When is violence justified? How far is the criminal mind from our own? How much can a young person bear before something breaks?

Under Andy Callis' very capable direction, this production embraced a measured pace, which paid off brilliantly. Slowing down a bit and committing to the fundamentals resulted in a play where at every turn, at every moment, the actors truly understood what their characters were doing and why. That was what drew me in and kept me on the edge of my seat until the very end.

Simon Rebeck delivered a phenomenal performance as Raskolnikov, demonstrating range and control as the tortured protagonist. His show-stopping monologue moved me to tears with its immediacy and power. Camilla Trudell and Will Milstein excelled in multiple roles, helping us track the evolution of different characters with subtle distinction rather than broad caricature.

The technical elements of the show occasionally reminded me that we were in a learning environment due to some minor whirring of lighting equipment and the HVAC system. These distractions didn't detract from the performance but rather made me wish that these promising students had access to quieter equipment.

The most surprising triumph of this production was that I frequently forgot that I was watching student theater and began critiquing the show by professional standards. For a front-row seat to the thrilling moments when study transforms into artistry, LCC's "Crime and Punishment" offers a masterclass in theater education done right.

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## Crime and Punishment

2/22/2025

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“Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* offers particular insight into not only radicalization, but responsibility, forgiveness, and the possibility of a resurrection,” writes director, Andy Callis in LCC’s program note. Heavy stuff, somewhat reminiscent of last night’s “Mankind” but this script felt more sincere and universal, to me.

Kudos to Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus for condensing and crafting this 566-page mega-novel into a 90-minute script, a collection of episodes and interrogations that explore Raskolnikov’s crime and his theory that “extraordinary men” can justify a crime motivated by a greater good — and how that plays out for him. Must all “leaders” also be “criminals” in this way? Trump’s recent comments about Napoleon make me wonder what he would think of this play.

Simon Rebeck is intense and sincere as the troubled criminal/hero, Raskolnikov. All the other roles are well played and well differentiated by the versatile Camilla Trudell and Will Milstein. They are both remarkable provocateurs for Simon’s psychological/spiritual/moral struggles.

The set is a wonderfully dark collage of doors and platforms that smoothly transform into various locations and cast an ominous mood. Violence is expressed with dramatic lighting effects. Lighting Designer was Steve Vangel and the Scene Designer Thalia Hollinger — and set praise goes to the collective tech/scene shop/construction team and painters.

“Do you believe in God?”  
“Does it matter?”  
“It might.”

*Crime and Punishment* continues at LCC’s Black Box through March 1 Friday and Saturday @ 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Admission is free. Audience members should visit the box office to pick up a seat voucher for entry into the theater. The box office will open ½ hour before curtain. Reservations will not be taken.

LCC Black Box Theatre, Gannon Building, Room 1422; entry door on Grand Avenue. Free parking is available on Grand Avenue and on the first floor of the Gannon Parking Ramp.

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