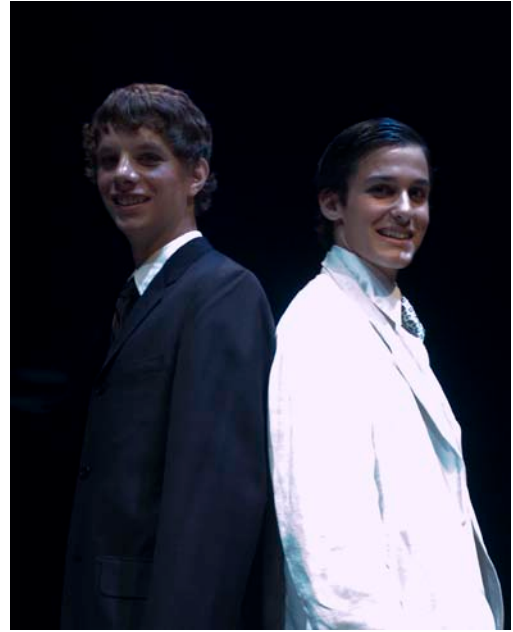


John Logan's *Never the Sinner* opens the Wabash Theater season with an uncomfortable portrayal of philosophy, murder and love. The performance you see before you comes directly from the text with very few changes from the polished script. The fluidity of the production should be noted as the crux of the performance's success, and it fits the author's intent. Logan originally wrote *Never the Sinner* as part of a class at Northwestern University, inspired by Meyer Levin's novel, *Compulsion*. Logan began his writing of this play in 1983 and ended his work with Leopold and Loeb in 1997 when it was produced in its polished form in New York City.



Never the Sinner tears the innocence of youth and learning from the preconceptions of its audience through the violence and remorseless nature of the protagonists. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, before their twentieth birthdays no less, had gained what they thought of as a level of higher existence and learning stemming from misinterpreted philosophies and contentious affections. This production questions the psyche of students who kill any inhibitions because of a passionate love. The codependency of the dual protagonists rears its head as the most important aspect of the play.

Undoubtedly, the audience will notice the mirrored characters of Leopold and Loeb throughout the production whether through speech patterns or actions. This is intentional due to the closeness and love shared by the protagonists. We must question whether to call them heroes. These young men had everything, wealth, privilege, and opportunity, and they fell from grace, as all true tragic heroes must. Yet, it is inconceivable that these two young men could be called heroes because of their heinous crime. Leopold and Loeb share an innocence and purity, however, through their shared moments that come as close to romance as any human can. However, the brutality and worldliness of these two "Übermensch" may force the audience to tell themselves that they are not heroes. To understand the relationship between the boys and



their immaturity brings to the forefront the question of Leopold and Loeb's culpability for their crime. It is impossible to separate the blame for the committing of the crime. As can be understood by the play's end, Leopold and Loeb are connected through much more than a friendship and a murder. As Logan says of the relationship, "They could not find their way in our sunlit world, so they embraced the darkness. In the darkness they only had each other." The production places an importance and a prominence on the boys that endears them to an audience. Unlikely and undeserving as they are, the boys hold a small place in our hearts.

"The Leopold and Loeb story," as it is subtitled, places the importance on the protagonists before the play even begins. The story attempts to uncover the 1920s and views of the media concerning the first "trial of the century." The production spends some time on the period; the director, designers and actors have done all they can to stay true to it. Countless hours of research and discussions of relevance to the world of Leopold and Loeb have produced what you see before you.

Though I believe it impossible to gain only one insight from this production, if the audience gathers one thing from *Never the Sinner* it is echoed by John Logan himself, "It's a love story.... This is, I suppose, a cautionary tale."

-Nelson Barre '08