



# Veterans' stories come to life on stage

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“BASETRACK Live” might make people uncomfortable, but star Tyler La Marr said that’s OK.

The multimedia theater production, at the Carling-Sorenson Theater at Babson College tonight, showcases the experiences of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in Afghanistan in 2010 through video interviews and dramatic performance.

“You are giving this intimate, inside look of military families, going on deployment and coming back,” La Marr told the Herald from a tour stop in Portland, Maine. “It can be a bit jarring for people. If they’ve had these experiences, it’s a little close to home, but those same people are (glad) the story is being told. It’s putting their experiences into words. One told me, ‘I’ve never known how to communicate what I was feeling to my family.’”

The stage production, created by Edward Bilous and adapted by writer Jason Grote, is based on an online photojournalist project done in 2010 on the battalion.

La Marr and co-star Ashley Bloom portray real life couple Cpl. AJ Czubai and his wife Melissa. The production also includes video interviews with Marines as they share their tales of deployment, combat and the return home.

La Marr, 28, was a sergeant in the Marines for six years and completed two tours in Iraq. When it came to casting, he wasn’t the only veteran in the audition process. “They were adamant they have someone who had served,” La Marr said.

La Marr and Czubai didn’t meet until the show had its premiere in Austin, Texas, in September.

“We are both Marines, we have similar stories, but I was never hurt,” said La Marr.

Czubai, 27, who shares the same birthday as La Marr, was deployed to Iraq in 2009 and Afghanistan in 2010, for which he received the Purple Heart.

The Babson show is the last performance of the 22-city tour.

“It is very good to have at least a few family members or family of veterans,” he said. “They give the rest of the audience permission to go along with the ride. There is some humor in the show. We’ve played shows where it’s been dead silent.”

The New York City-based performer co-founded the Society of Artistic Veterans.

“It really touches on the humanity of the people who serve,” La Marr said. “That is something people forget when they look at the military. They are people like everyone else. They’ve chosen to serve their country. They do their job, they go to war, that is what they do, but we are sons, husbands, wives, daughters; we all have dreams and aspirations when we get out. We have these experiences who have shaped who we are as a person as well.”

A free panel discussion will follow the show.

“BASETRACK Live” at the Carling-Sorenson Theater, Babson College, 231 Forest St., Wellesley. Tonight at 8, \$25, 866-811-4111, [babson arts.org](http://babsonarts.org).