

Driftwood

Site tells hometown stories
page 26



Ten years later

'Laramie' epilogue to premiere in over 100 theatres, in Carolinas

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the groundbreaking play, "The Laramie Project," and over 100 theatres across the country will join in remembering the life of Matthew Shepard and the legacy of the play on Oct. 12.

The play, first written and performed by the Tectonic Theater Project, recounts the aftermath of the Shepard hate crime.

On Oct. 6, 1998, Shepard, an openly gay college student, was beaten and left to die tied to fence outside Laramie, Wyo. He died six days later. The town of Laramie was left reeling with an onslaught of national media attention, as Shepard's death and ensuing trial of his killers became a turning point in the debate over anti-LGBT violence and hate crimes.

A month after Shepard's death, members of the Tectonic Theater traveled to Laramie. They conducted

interviews with the people of the town and from those interviews wrote "The Laramie Project." The play has been performed worldwide, turned into a film for HBO and has been seen by more than 50 million people around the country.

On Oct. 12, over 100 theatres, including three in the Carolinas, will premiere Tectonic Theater's compelling 10-year anniversary epilogue, "The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later." The writers of the play are Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris, and Stephen Belber.

The epilogue delves into and explores the long-term effects of Shepard's murder among the townspeople and community of Laramie. It explores how Laramie has

changed and grown, and how the murder and its aftermath continue to reverberate in the community.

"The Tectonic Theater Project set out to find out how Laramie had changed in the ten years since the murder of Matthew Shepard. When we arrived, we were forced to confront the question, 'How do you measure change in a community?' One of the

things we found when we got there, which greatly surprised us, was people in Laramie saying this was not a hate crime," Moises Kaufman, Artistic Director of Tectonic Theater Project, said in a release.

The play includes follow-up interviews with Judy Shepard, killer Aaron McKinney and Laramie residents first featured in the original play: Romaine Patterson, Reggie Fluty, Jedediah Shultz, Father Roger Schmidt, Jonas Slonaker, Beth Loffreda and others.

"We found the people of Laramie still fighting to own their own history, their own identity, their own story, and part of that is shaped by how they understand what happened that night to Matthew," said co-writer Leigh Fondakowski.

Tectonic Theater will also launch an online, interactive community at www.laramieproject.org. Users will be able to blog, upload videos and photos and share their stories about the play and experiences preparing and presenting the epilogue in their local communities. ▸

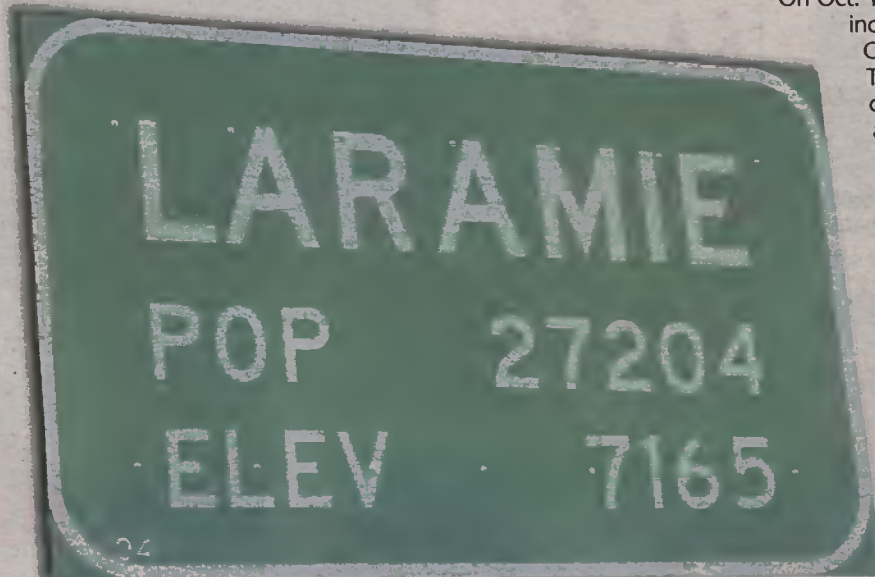


Photo Credit: Jimmy Wayne, via Flickr. Licensed under Creative Commons.

In the Carolinas

"The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later" will be performed on Oct. 12 at three theatres across the Carolinas.

Burning Coal Theater Company • Raleigh
www.burningcoal.org
919-834-4001

Paper Lantern Company • Winston-Salem
www.paperlanterntheatre.com
336-721-1310

Pure Theatre • Charleston
www.puretheatre.org
843-723-4444

Two decades and counting: SC Pride revels in 20th anniversary

When Palmetto Staters take to the streets in downtown Columbia on Sept. 12, they'll be marching in the legacy left by countless icons and leaders preceding them in the two decades since the SC Pride Movement's birth.

In 1989, PFLAG mom Harriett Hancock initiated the planning stages for what we now know as the SC Pride Movement. At a picnic on Dreher Island, Hancock signed up LGBT community members willing to help organize a march down Columbia's Main Street. At the time, South Carolina had no activist or advocacy organization, and Columbia's PFLAG chapter was the only avenue for support and visibility.

After a year of planning, 1500 community members turned out on June 23, 1990 to march down Main St.

"The participants began to gather around 11 a.m. and mixed and mingled until the march began at about five minutes past noon," then-administrative manager David Stout wrote for the July 1990 print issue of Q-Notes. "The parade members festively played and joked with one another as everyone tried to work out the jitters of being in the first-ever, large-scale display of gay activism in the state's history."

Among those present for the first SC Pride parade was Jim Blanton and Barbara Embick, co-chairs of the event;

singer and humorist Lynn Lavner, who skipped New York's Pride to attend the event; the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Robert Bray; and Charlotte's One Voice Chorus.

In the time since that first intrepid act of solidarity and Pride, the SC Pride Movement has evolved into a statewide advocacy force. The group sponsors and runs the Harriett Hancock Community Center, the state's first-ever LGBT center and permanent community resource. They also sponsor Rainbow Radio, Columbia's LGBT-focused talk show, which premiered in October 2005 and airs Sundays on WOIC-AM 1230.

In 2008, the group claimed a Pride attendance of 6,000 or more, and landed public sponsorship funds from the City of Columbia. This year, both the city and Richland County are chief sponsors. Other sponsors include WXYR 99.3 FM, *Carolina Purple Pages*, *OnQ Carolina Edition*, *Amro Worldwide*, *Q-Notes*, *Marriott Columbia*, *David and Southern Voice*, MTV's LOGO, Time Warner Cable and others.

At a glance:

Flip to pages 12 and 14 for a listing of SC Pride events and a special Out on the Town nightlife, restaurant and lodging guide. ▸

— by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

next issue
September 19, 2009

NC Pride Preview
Events, food & drink, lodging

Annual Music Issue
All that's rad in the world of tunes