

The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later -- A Review



By Scott Johnston

Following on last year's terrific and thought-provoking production of 'The Laramie Project', Theatre Aurora has done it again with 'The Laramie Project ? Ten Years Later?.

Both plays are based on the true events of the kidnapping, beating and eventual death in October 1998 of Matthew Shepard, a university student in Laramie, Wyoming.

Shortly after this event, Moises Kaufman and a team from the Tectonic Theatre Project travelled to Laramie, conducting over 200 interviews with its citizens. Their 1999 production of 'The Laramie Project?', which is now one of the most performed plays in North America, was synthesized from the resulting material.

The new play 'Ten Years Later?' is just that; a return visit by the Tectonic Theatre to the town. They find that physically the town has changed, but have the people?

Through a series of short vignettes, it's explored how the events of ten years earlier are viewed by residents, how perceptions may have changed, and whether any good has come from such a terrible tragedy.

The play stands on its own, and it is not necessary to have seen the first one in order to follow and enjoy this production.

Producer Steve Wolfer and Director Sergio Calderon and their team have once again done a great job adapting this play to the Factory Theatre through the use of music, sound, lighting, and video screens.

The simple stage lends itself to both rapid and seamless transitions between the various vignettes, and focuses attention on the characters.

One of the main reasons this play works so well is the terrific cast of five men and five women, all but one of whom were part of the original Theatre Aurora production 16 months ago. Between them, they play dozens of roles ranging from students, to police officers, to media, to friends and family members, to average citizens, to politicians, to members of the Tectonic Theatre Project, and even the men charged in the murder.

All of them play their parts perfectly, needing only very basic props and costume changes to transform themselves from character to character.

While the subject matter of this play is difficult, the play itself is thought-provoking, and this wonderful production will keep you engrossed until the very end.

Evening performances of this limited production of "The Laramie Project" Ten Years Later? continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, June 26-28. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.