

The Laramie Project Cycle FAQs

What is Tectonic Theater Project?

Tectonic Theater Project is an award-winning company whose plays have been performed around the world. The company is dedicated to developing innovative works that explore theatrical language and form, and fostering an artistic dialogue with our audiences on the social, political and human issues that affect us all. In service of this goal, Tectonic supports readings, workshops, and full theatrical productions, as well as Training Labs in our play-making technique called Moment Work.

The company is behind such plays as *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, *The Laramie Project Cycle*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *One Arm*, *El Gato con Botas*, *33 Variations* (5 Tony nominations, including a Best Actress nomination for Jane Fonda), and *The Tallest Tree in the Forest*.

Tectonic has received numerous awards including the Humanitas Prize, the Obie, the Lucille Lortel Award, The Outer Critics Circle Award, the GLAAD Media Award, the Artistic Integrity Award from HRC, and the Making a Difference Award/Matthew Shepard Foundation.

What is *The Laramie Project*?

A month after the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, the members of Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie, WY and conducted interviews with the people of the town. From these interviews they wrote *The Laramie Project*, which has become one of the most performed plays in America in the last decade. The company later made the play into a film for HBO. Combined, the play and the movie have been seen by more than 50 million people around the world.

What inspired Tectonic to go to Laramie in 1998?

There are thousands of anti-gay hate crimes a year, but this one captured America's attention. The members of Tectonic went to Laramie to record how this event had affected the town. The hope was that this would shed light on the ideas and beliefs that were shaping our nation.

Also, there was a polarization that took place in the national conversation that led to: a) an oversimplification of vastly complicated ideas, like prejudice, class issues, gender issues, and b) many bigoted people being allowed to take center stage, as the media seemed to find it necessary to find two sides in a debate about homosexuality. Tectonic's goal was to find the story of the people of Laramie in their own words.

From a theatrical perspective, Tectonic was curious about what role theater artists can have in a national dialogue about current events.

Why did Tectonic return in 2008?

The murder of Matthew Shepard had such seismic impact on this small town in America, that the company wanted to try to observe what, if any, were the long lasting effects of such a crime. How does a town look like 10 years after an episode of this magnitude? Have the attitudes changed? The mythologies? Has change occurred that's concrete and lasting?

For those reasons, the group returned to re-interview past participants, conduct new interviews with Laramie residents and most dramatically, interview Judy Shepard and Aaron McKinney (Matthew Shepard's murderer).

Which of the company members returned in 2008?

Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Andy Paris, Greg Pierotti, and Stephen Belber all re-visited Laramie in 2008.

On October 12, 2009, the 11th anniversary of the death of Matthew Shepard, Tectonic Theater Project premiered *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* at Alice Tully Hall at New York's Lincoln Center.

The play was simultaneously performed in 150 theaters in all 50 states and 8 countries. What was the motivation for this event?

The Laramie Project is a play with a tremendous historical and cultural impact and Tectonic is proud to have initiated a nationwide unveiling of the epilogue as a reminder to itself, its audiences, and its communities that Matthew Shepard's story still reverberates, and that, unfortunately, many of the issues the murder brought up are still unresolved.

Tectonic also wanted to participate in a great experiment reminiscent of The Federal Theater Project. The Federal Theater Project used to perform the same play in dozens of theaters across the country simultaneously, so this nationwide performance event was a nod to that period and to see how theater can play a role in a national dialogue. To help facilitate that conversation, a pre- and post-show component was also broadcast live to all the participating theaters. The pre-show portion included an introduction by the writers, as well as appearances from special guests. The post-show consisted of a Question and Answer session.

What was the motivation for LaramieProject.org?

In tandem with Tectonic's premiere of *10 Years Later*, www.laramieproject.org was launched for members to blog, upload videos and photos, and share their stories about *The Laramie Project Cycle* in an ongoing effort to keep this discussion relevant.

Why does Tectonic think these plays are important?

The Laramie Project portrayed one town in America at the end of the millennium. In doing so, it also managed to capture something profoundly American, something about social injustices, about beliefs, and about idiosyncrasies. So while it told the story of one American town, it also spoke to America as a whole.

The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later looks at what has and has not changed in Laramie since Matthew's 1998 murder. It also explores how people construct stories and history, both on an individual level and on a societal level. Together these plays, *The Laramie Project Cycle*, attempt to promote dialogue about equality and justice, and examine how people and communities construct and reconstruct narrative and perspective.

These plays generates a lot of controversy, protests, and calls for cancellation. How do you respond to that?

It is okay for theater to be controversial. The goal of *The Laramie Project Cycle* is to promote thoughtful discussion and give audiences the opportunity to hear many different points-of-view from those most associated with the murder of Matthew Shepard. Yes, there have been protests, but they only demonstrate the need for more education and conversation about the issues that are explored in the plays.

If a production in which you're involved is receiving negative press, please reach out to Matthew Freeman, Tectonic's Education Director at matthewf@tectonictheaterproject.org.

How does one get permission to stage *The Laramie Project*?

Contact Dramatists Play Service. [Go here for more information and to apply online.](#)

Is there a shorter version or can the play be cut to a shorter length?

No. The play may not be altered in any way without the express written permission of Tectonic Theater Project. All requests should be made through matthewf@tectonictheaterproject.org.

Can obscenities be edited from the script?

In the case of school productions, permission can be granted to omit offensive words. Send a request to matthewf@tectonictheaterproject.org.

Can performances of *The Laramie Project* be taped?

No. Audiotapes or videotapes of any production of *The Laramie Project* are not permitted. We do not make exceptions.

Is the original design of the poster for *The Laramie Project* available for use?

Yes. To obtain the licensing rights to use the image, please contact Theatre Logos Agency at <http://www.theatrelogos.com>.