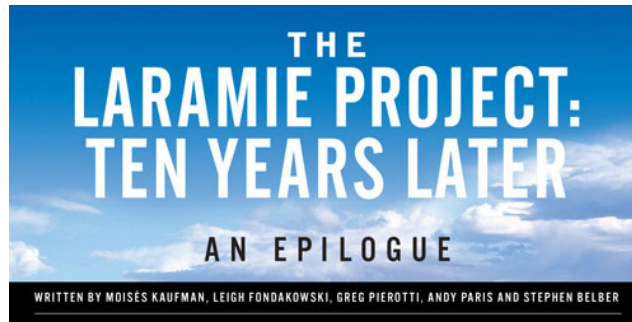




**PRESS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Syracuse Stage to Participate in World Premiere of  
*The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later, Epilogue***



Written by members of the Tectonic Theatre Project:  
Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris & Stephen Belber

Directed by Joseph Whelan

STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE  
7:45 p.m. on Monday, October 12, 2009  
Free and Open to the Public

(Syracuse, NY)— Syracuse Stage will present a staged reading of *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, an epilogue to the highly acclaimed play *The Laramie Project*. Coordinated by Tectonic Theatre Project, the epilogue will receive its world premiere at over 100 theatres on the same day in fifty states, Canada, Great Britain, Spain, Hong Kong and Australia. The Syracuse Stage event will include a live introductory web cast from Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in New York City hosted by Glenn Close, a staged reading of *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*, and a Q&A session.

**This world premiere event will begin at 7:45 p.m. on October 12 in the Storch Theatre at Syracuse Stage, 820 East Genesee Street. It will be free and open to the public.**

"This is an unprecedented theatrical event linking more than one hundred theatres and using technology to, in effect, unite audiences in many locations as one big audience," said Artistic Director Tim Bond. "It's exactly the kind of global event we should be part of, especially as it concerns such an important issue that we feel right here in Syracuse."

In October of 1998, Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student, was tied to a fence, savagely beaten and left for dead by two men, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney. Shepard died six days later. The Tectonic Theatre Company developed the original *Laramie*

*Project* in the months following Shepard's murder. Members of the company interviewed hundreds of Laramie residents to chronicle the life of the town in the immediate aftermath of the vicious crime. The epilogue focuses on the long-term effects of the murder. It explores how the town has changed and how the murder continues to reverberate in the community. The play includes new interviews with Matthew's mother Judy Shepard and Mathew's murderers, who are serving life sentences. The writers also conducted many follow-up interviews with Laramie residents from the original piece, including Romaine Patterson, Reggie Fluty, Jedediah Shultz, Father Roger Schmidt, Jonas Slonaker, Beth Loffreda and others.

"The Tectonic Theatre 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," said Moises Kaufman, Artistic Director of Tectonic Theatre Project.

"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," continued Leigh Fondakowski.

"Creating the epilogue also gave us the opportunity to talk to Aaron McKinney about his crime, what his thinking is about it now, and what his experience has been in prison over the past decade," said Greg Pierotti, the company member who interviewed McKinney. "We were also able to speak with Matthew's mother, Judy Shepard, whose striking transformation from privately grieving mother to civil rights activist has captured the nation's attention," concluded Andy Paris. Judy Shepard will participate in the pre-show web cast.

"The issue of hate crimes touches many communities including our own," added Bond noting the murder of LaTeisha Green and an incident at ArtRage.

This November marks the one-year anniversary of the murder of 22-year-old LaTeisha Green, a transgender person living in Syracuse, NY. In July of 2009, Green's killer became just the second person in the U.S. and the first in New York State convicted of a hate crime that involved a transgender victim. Around the same time as the trial, Rose Viviano, Gallery Director of the ArtRage Gallery in Syracuse's Hawley-Green neighborhood, discovered that someone had written "There is no such thing as a proud queer" on one of the gallery's windows, in front of a poster that said "Generation Q: Young, Proud, Queer." Viviano responded by inviting the community to write messages of support and hope, which soon dwarfed the original graffiti.

The reading at Syracuse Stage will be directed by long-time Stage staff member Joseph Whelan. As an adjunct faculty member in Syracuse University's Department of Drama, Whelan directed the original version of *The Laramie Project* in a production that was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2004.

"This play and the original *Laramie* ask us very directly to consider how and why we teach children to hate," said Whelan. "It deserves our attention."

"This is an important story that has the potential to touch our lives and affect the way we think. It illuminates our common humanity," Bond said. "Presenting new plays is critical to our mission, and we invite the whole community to join us for this special reading."

## MATTHEW SHEPARD

On October 6th of 1998 Matthew Shepard was beaten and left to die tied to a fence in the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming. He died 6 days later. His murder became a watershed historical moment in America that highlighted the violence and prejudice lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face.

## THE LARAMIE PROJECT

A month after Matthew Shepard's murder, the members of Tectonic Theatre Project traveled to Laramie and conducted interviews with the people of the town. From these interviews they wrote the play *The Laramie Project*, which they later made into a film for HBO. The piece has been seen by more than 50 million people around the country.

## TECTONIC THEATRE PROJECT

Tectonic Theatre Project (Moisés Kaufman, Artistic Director; Greg Reiner, Executive Director; Jeffrey LaHoste, Managing Director; Dominick Balledda, General Manager) is an award-winning company whose plays have been performed around the world. Since 1992 TTP has produced innovative works that explore theatrical language and form, fostering an artistic dialogue with our audiences on the social, political and human issues of the day. The company has developed and produced works for theatre and film, including: the smash hit *Gross Indecency*, *The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, *The Laramie Project* (one of the most produced plays in the country, as well as an HBO movie written and directed by Kaufman); and *I Am My Own Wife* (2004 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for best play). Tectonic has garnered 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 the Human Rights Campaign, and the Making a Difference Award from the Matthew Shepard Foundation. The film of *The Laramie Project* was also honored with four Emmy Nominations, The National Board of Review Award for Outstanding Made for Television Movie and a Golden Bear Award from the Berlin Film Festival. In addition to creating theatrical works, Tectonic Theatre Project works in residence at Universities around the country and hosts a New York based training lab for theatre artists. For more information on the company, visit [www.tectonictheaterproject.org](http://www.tectonictheaterproject.org).

## SYRACUSE STAGE

Syracuse Stage is Central New York's premier professional theatre. Founded in 1974, Stage has produced more than 220 plays in 36 seasons including a number of world, American, and East Coast premieres. Each season 90,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays and bold interpretations of classics and musicals featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves over 30,000 students from 24 counties. A solid core of subscribers and supporters helps keep Syracuse Stage a vibrant artistic presence in Central New York. Additional support comes from the government, foundations, corporations and Syracuse University. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), the University Hill Corporation and the East Genesee Regent Association. Syracuse Stage is a member of The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country.

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Syracuse Stage | Producing Artistic Director: Timothy Bond | Managing Director: Jeffrey Woodward  
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