

# Suzy Goes See

## Sydney Theatre Reviews | Australian Theatre

1DEC2018

### Review: The Laramie Project & The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later (Seymour Centre)

posted in Theatre by Suzy Wrong



**Venue:** Seymour Centre (Chippendale NSW), Nov 28 – Dec 8, 2018

**Playwrights:** Moises Kaufman and members of Tectonic Theater Project

**Directors:** Carly Fisher, Rosie Niven

**Cast:** John Michael Burdon, Laura Djanegara, Andrew Hofman, Francisco Lopez, Linda Nicholls-Gidley, Matthew Pritchard, Dominique Purdue, Emily Richardson, Charlotte Tilelli  
Images by David Hooley

#### Theatre review

The brutal murder of 21 year-old gay man Matthew Shepard in 1998, endures in our collective memory, partly because of Tectonic Theater Project's seminal work *The Laramie Project*. Utilising techniques of verbatim theatre, the group's exhaustive research and interview processes have resulted in an exceptionally powerful work that confronts homophobia, in a manner that is

much more far reaching than its very localised context might suggest. Along with its follow-up *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later*, both pieces combine to offer a truthful and complex study of hate in communities, examining the way it operates, and reflecting on its disheartening tenacity.

Directed in tandem by Carly Fisher and Rosie Niven, it is a dynamic and stirring staging of the pair of plays, with innovative use of space ensuring optimum poignancy for every pertinent message in this Laramie cycle. Lighting design by Martin Kinnane is particularly effective in regulating dramatic intensity, and proves invaluable in the smooth execution of countless scene transitions.

Performing a very extensive range of roles, is a remarkably cohesive ensemble, including John Michael Burdon and Charlotte Tilelli who leave strong impressions with their varied and often flamboyant approaches to their respective catalogues of personalities. Also memorable are Andrew Hofman and Dominique Purdue who dial up the emotions, in several affecting sequences delivered with complete and unequivocal vulnerability.

It is now twenty years since Matthew Shepard was killed on that fence, in Small Town USA. The imagery is vivid, a sacrificial lamb hanging off a divide, with residents on either side, split by opinion and perspective. In many ways, we have since advanced as peoples, especially in relation to the legislation of LGBTIQI protections and marriage equality, but it is clear that our current climate of disunity in the Twitter and Trump era, is quite unprecedented.

In this digital age, we seem to have lost the capacity to think outside of zeros and ones; everything is torn asunder into left and right, love and hate, good and bad. We make enemies much more quickly than ever before, each of us moving around in hunting mode, with voracious appetites, judging people into categories that do nothing other than to amplify our disdain for a perceived adversary. We need to find ways instead, to embrace the other side, if that is what it takes to take us to the realisation, that the other side does not exist at all.

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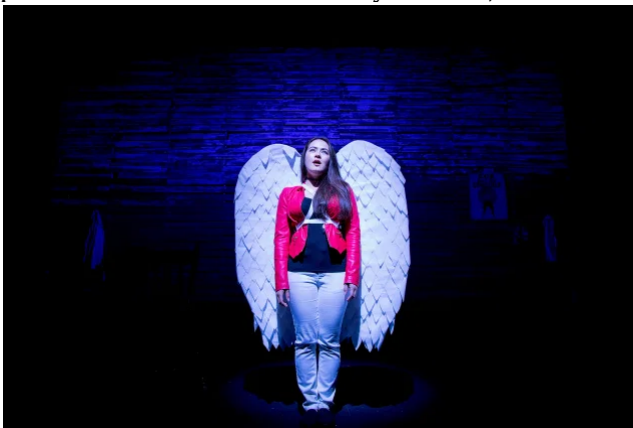
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