

MEET TERRY VANDIVORT

PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER OF THE INCIDENT

Terry was born and raised in Dallas, TX at a time when it was a growing town surrounded by cotton fields. Downtown Dallas was lined with the great movie palaces. Virtually every Saturday night, the family went to the movies downtown and at that time the movies were an event. He started going to the Dallas Civic Opera in elementary school, just two years after Maria Callas performed the inaugural recital to open the Opera. Opera instilled in him the love of the epic gesture, voice, and story, which remain at the core of his artistic journey.

He went to SMU in the early days of its becoming a nationally recognized theater program, as a member of the Professional Acting Curriculum. It was a time of great social, political, and cultural change, laying the foundation for the rest of his life. Newly evolving techniques and tools were part of a laboratory of traditional and experimental storytelling infused with the social ferment and political rebelliousness of the time.

He visited New York City often during the 70's and made the inevitable move in 1980. For a couple of years, the growing power of the gay liberation movement and the vibrant culture of New York's queer community were the focus, the major step in the final sculpting of personhood. And the theater reflected that. Not Broadway, but tiny holes in the wall like the Players Theater at 115 MacDougall Street, where the first act of "Torch Song Trilogy" debuted under the title of "The International Stud". There were dozens of these and they expanded his vision of storytelling. Tell the truth, break the rules, and dare to jump without a net.



photo credit: Jeffrey Schmidt

He returned to Dallas a few years later to restart his acting career that had begun in 1970 at Theatre Three. He has been in Dallas since continuing his artistic career and his activist leanings, being one of the original members of ACT-UP Dallas. Following bypass surgery three years ago, he decided it was time to deal with some unfinished business and embarked on writing his first play, "The Incident". With the generous support of Kitchen Dog Theater, The Drama Club, and his colleague Cameron Cobb, the story can now be told.

"It stayed with me for over 35 years, the obsession of it, the mystery of it. I read Agatha Christie, because I knew they would always be solved [...] Mystery bugs me. I don't find it compelling or fascinating or adventurous. It's addictive. And because this was such a big event, solving the mysteries around that night became an obsession." Terry Vandivort