

In one of the most moving, hypnotic, emotionally rich works of the year, playwright Carol Lynn Pearson delivers an unforgettable tale about parents and children, and lovers and loved ones. But "Facing East" may be remembered most for the way it so marvelously builds bridges between the Mormon Church and the LGBT community.

And it all unfolds on the gravesite of a gay Mormon man who committed suicide.

Pearson moves back and forth through time in "Facing East," but the crux of the tale revolves around a Mormon couple (Alex and Ruth) devastated over the loss of their son. A reflective Alex (Charles Lynn Frost) is more empathetic than his wife, Ruth (Jayne Luke)—he simply wants to understand his deceased son and know why death found him at such a young age. Ruth acts on instinct. She pulls up her spiritual pants and fastens them tight, unable to reconcile with the fact that she even had a gay son, and that her son had a lover, Marcus (Jay Perry). The Mormon Church, she often proclaims, simply does not condone such "behavior." They did right by their son, she says. What more could they have done?

A lot, suspects Alex.

And so it goes, on the gravesite—parents attempting to find some mental nugget to guide them through a myriad of horrors.

Pearson is a prolific, deep playwright, poet and bestselling author and she knows how to water this creative soil well. She's had practice.

After graduating Brigham Young University in the '60s, she met Gerald Pearson, "a shining, blond, enthusiastic young man, who fell in love with me and my poems," she writes on her website clpearson.com.

Gerald eventually came out and the two faced some curious dilemmas within their Mormon Church. Eventually, they moved from Salt Lake City to Walnut Creek, Calif., but Gerald died of AIDS in the early '80s.

Carol Lynn went on to write more poetry and turn heads with her book "Goodbye, I Love You," among others.

"Facing East" culls from Pearson's experiences working with the Mormon Church and its people. It's directed with sharp simplicity by Jerry Rapiere, who was wise enough, it seems, to let Pearson's work shine on its own—the set is stark, with only two chairs and one "grave."

The interplay between the actors is pitch perfect, often unsettling and downright thought-provoking. As Alex and Ruth, Frost and Luke deliver stellar performances, both memorable and deeply effecting.

As Marcus, Perry is a powerhouse. His surprising entrance in the play's final moments sends it spinning in an entirely different direction. Suddenly, it's barbecue time for the soul—everybody's emotional meat sizzles as nothing is left unexamined as the parents and their son's gay lover try to come to terms with their own inner demons and the love they lost.

But rising like a Phoenix from the wreckage of hurt feelings, is a message of hope. Maybe a troubled mind and a wounded heart can, in fact, turn and face each other in a spiritual fork in the road neither saw coming.