Pulitzer Prize-winning Playwright for

**BALM IN GILEAD**

LANFORD WILSON

Born April 13, 1937 (Lebanon, Missouri)
Died March 24, 2011 (Wayne, New Jersey)

**LANFORD WILSON: AN APPRECIATION**

by Dr. Dennis Maher
Dramaturg for the Maverick Theatre Company production of BALM IN GILEAD

"When I’m asked whom I write for, after the obligatory, I write only for myself, I realize that I have an imaginary circle of peers - writers and respected or savvy theatre folk, some dramatic writers and some noted, some living, some long gone."

--- Lanford Wilson

Margalit Fox of *The New York Times* perfectly described the life and work of Lanford Wilson: "Thematically, his work concerned dissolutions large and small: the rupture of societies, families and individual marriages; the loss of life, love, companionship and sanity. His characters, drawn true to life if sometimes larger, tended toward the socially marginalized, perhaps no surprise for a man whose identity — Ozark, somewhat rootless, a child of a broken home, gay at a time when it was taboo to be gay — no doubt made him feel pushed to the margins of mainstream culture himself. Mr. Wilson was noted for being one of the first mainstream playwrights to create central, meaningful gay and lesbian characters."

"Nobody's safe around a writer."

--- Lanford Wilson

The *New York Times* Theatre Critic Ben Brantley summed up Wilson’s work by saying, “Wilson loved losers.” By this he meant that Wilson found so much drama, so much conflict, so much heroism, in those usually considered “losers.” As a marginalized person, Wilson understood outsiders and outliers on the edges of society—many of which are depicted in BALM IN GILEAD. The distinguishing hallmark of Wilson’s work was his dialogue. His dialogue mixes overlapping authenticity in a hyper-realistic setting, creating its own kind of musicality, a poetic, 20th century cacophony. Wilson revolutionized the Off-Off-Broadway scene, moving from those venues to mainstream Broadway theatres. He won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for *TALLEY’S FOLLY*. Wilson’s many plays include THE RIMERS OF ELDRITCH, THE MOUND BUILDERS, THE HOT L. BALTIMORE, BOOK OF DAYS, HOME FREE, and BALM IN GILEAD (all produced by the Maverick Theatre Company).

"If you can no longer think about the future, and you once dreamed of everlasting love, don't give up the dream, find it again."

--- Lanford Wilson

Wilson was single when he died, which is fitting, as he was a singular talent and a "unicorn" in a world of great but not singular playwrights. He leaves behind a legacy of plays which have revolutionized, and which continues to revolutionize, the U.S. theatre.