

Dec. 27, 2011 - Article from the Washington Daily News:



Jeff Emmerich (left) and fellow actor in "A Star in the East," the last production performed at Rocky Hock Playhouse in Washington. (Contributed Photo)

Rocky Hock hits the road

Published 12:23am Tuesday, December 27, 2011

By [Vail Stewart Rumley](#)

Rocky Hock Playhouse returns to new home in Edenton

The curtains rose for the new theater's first production in 2009. Renovated and revived by Rocky Hock Playhouse director Jeff Emmerich and Tim Hardison, the building's owner, the old P.S. Jones Middle School building on 8th Street had found new life as the home for the Emmerichs' Christian theater productions. Over 30,000 tickets were sold to theater-goers drawn by such shows as "A Night of Glory," "Born This Day," and the most recent, and last, production "A Star in the East." After three years, Jeff and Gloria Emmerich are taking their show on the road, moving the Playhouse back to Edenton.

The Rocky Hock Playhouse is one of only a few full-time professional Christian theaters on the east coast. From 2000 to 2009, they entertained nearly 185,000 people in Edenton, where they drew a large audience from eastern North Carolina and the tidewater region of Virginia, before moving to the production company to Washington. A changing lease agreement with the owners of the building in Washington housing the Playhouse, as well as new

opportunities to stage their productions elsewhere, led Jeff and Gloria Emmerich to make a move for the new year.

"We had been approached a while back by a really big church in Rocky Mount," said Emmerich. "A pastor came to our show last summer...and asked us if we wanted to do productions there."

Along with Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, another large church in Morehead City, Glad Tidings Church, had reached out, with an offer to host four weekends of performances between the regular productions in Washington. This led the Emmerichs to scale down and to the decision to move to the Nixon Catering Banquet Facilities on Highway 32 south of Edenton.

"We thought maybe it's just time to do dinner theater and keep up with these other performances," explained Emmerich.

Both Emmerichs perform in all Rocky Hock Playhouse productions, as well as manage affairs behind the scenes: Jeff Emmerich, as stage director and set designer, builder, and painter; and Gloria Emmerich, as musical director, playwright, lyricist, and composer. Though Jeff Emmerich is not actively seeking other facilities in which to stage productions, he says he is open to the idea of taking their major productions on the road.

"We started 37 years ago by touring and traveling—Australia, Germany, Puerto Rico," said Jeff Emmerich. "We're really good at touring theater."

In addition to the opportunities provided by the Morehead and Rocky Mount churches, Emmerich cited the flailing economy and the loss of the Playhouse's Virginia audience because of the additional driving distance as factors in the decision to close the Washington theater.

Rocky Hock Playhouse is the second theater this month to go dark in Washington: the Turnage Theaters Foundation closed the doors of the renovated Turnage Theater on Dec. 17, citing financial insolvency.

"Washington's lost not one, but two of its theaters, and that's sad," said Emmerich. "I hate to leave (the theater) behind."