



Tom Murphy

February 23, 1935 - May 15, 2018

PLEASE JOIN US IN THE TRIBUTE SECTION OF MARTIN OAKS CEMETERY AND CREMATORY WEBSITE WHERE WE REMEMEBER FINE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE SOME LASTING CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SOCIETY. NOT ALL OF THE OBITUARIES WE PRINT HERE ARE NOTABLES OR CELEBRITIES: THEY ARE PEOPLE WE FEEL DESERVE RECOGNITION FOR THE LIVES THEY LIVED. THE ORIGIN OF OBITUARIES CAN BE TRACED BACK TO ROMAN TIMES WHERE A “DAILY ACTS” (ACTA DIURNA) NEWSLETTER WAS PUT OUT ON PAPYRUS. IT INCLUDED ANNOUNCEMENTS OF PASSINGS. THE LATIN WORD FOR OBITUARY IS OBITUS, WHICH MEANT GOING TO A PLACE, LIKE A SETTING SUN – IT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE ROMAN CULTURE TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE FINAL DISPOSITIONS, INCLUDING DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS. WILLIAM GLADSTONE, FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND A DISTINGUISHED OBSERVER OF THE HUMAN CONDITION, SAID THAT HE COULD TELL THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE OF A COMMUNITY BY THE WAY IT REMEMBERED ITS DEAD. OTHERS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT IT’S ALMOST A PART OF THE HUMAN DNA TO WANT TO BE CHERISHED BY THOSE WHO GO AFTER US – A PHILOSOPHER COMPARED THIS TO “CARVING YOUR INTITIALS ON THE TREE OF LIFE.” WE ALL WISH TO LEAVE A MARK, NOT TO JUST DISAPPEAR, FOREVER FORGOTTEN. ALTHOUGH OBITUARY WRITING HAS EVOLVED THROUGH THE AGES, THE PURPOSE OF THOSE ROMAN NOTICES HAVE REMAINED IN EFFECT: TO CALL ATTENTION TO AN IMPORTANT LIFE CYCLE EVENT. TODAY’S OBITUARIES TELL A LIFE STORY, ALBEIT IN VERY SHORT FORM. A SENSE OF THE PERSON WHO IS PASSED, AN ACCOUNT OF THE MEMOIRES THEY CREATED FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND IS THE CONERSTONE OF ANY WELL WRITTEN OBITUARY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH US THE STORIES OF YOUR LOVED ONES, PLEASE SEND THEM ON – WE WILL BE HAPPY TO INCLUDE THEM IN OUR TRIBUTES. “SO WE BEAT ON, BOATS AGAINST THE CURRENT, BOURNE BACK CEASELESSLY

INTO THE PAST," F. SCOTT FITZGERALD.

Tom Murphy, an influential Irish playwright known for dark tales told with a rustic musicality, died on Tuesday in Dublin. He was 83.

His wife, the actress Jane Brennan, said the cause was heart failure.

Mr. Murphy wrote dozens of plays across a half-century. Garry Hynes, artistic director of Druid Theater Company, which has produced many of those plays, said he ranks with Brian Friel as one of Ireland's greatest contemporary playwrights, though he was not as well known internationally, partly because he ventured into more difficult emotional terrain. "Some of Brian's plays were easier, I think, for non-Irish audiences to access," Ms. Hynes said in a telephone interview. "In Tom's case, he was unflinching in his rage about the way things were. He wrote with a very raw essence. He didn't spare himself or his characters." As Mr. Murphy himself put it in 2001 in an interview with The New York Times: "What gets me down gets me started. It's a brooding thing."

Among those posting tributes to Mr. Murphy was the president of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. "We have had no greater use of language for the stage than in the body of work produced by Tom Murphy," Mr. Higgins said in a statement.

Thomas Bernard Patrick Murphy was born on Feb. 23, 1935, in Tuam, County Galway, the youngest of 10 children. His father, Jack, was a carpenter, and his mother, Winnifred (Shaughnessy) Murphy, was a homemaker.

Mr. Murphy started writing for a local amateur theater group while working in the town's sugar factory. He studied metalworking at a technical college and taught that subject for a time, but struggled with an internal distraction.

"I found that this thing I had about writing interfered with that," he said in a 1963 interview, explaining why he had left teaching and relocated to London.

Not just any kind of writing would do, though.

"I felt I could never write prose," he told Bomb Magazine in 2012. "I knew that I couldn't go into film because it was too remote. But with plays, I didn't have to know grammar or syntax or any rules to write the way that people spoke."

His first full-length play, "A Whistle in the Dark," had its premiere in London in 1961, after having been rejected by the Abbey Theater of Dublin. ("He didn't just get a rejection letter," the Irish critic Fintan O'Toole, a longtime acquaintance, recounted in an interview on Wednesday on Ireland's RTE Radio. "He got a really kind of abusive letter.")

The play was about a family of Irishmen in Coventry, England, awash in rivalries and resentments. Kenneth Tynan, the British critic, called the initial production "arguably the most uninhibited display of brutality that the London theater has ever witnessed."

The play, perhaps Mr. Murphy's best-known work, had emigration as one of its themes. It was a subject to which he returned often.

“Everything in his plays is kind of broken,” Mr. O’Toole said. “Everybody feels that they’re not quite a full person.”

Mr. Murphy eventually made peace with the Abbey, which staged 19 premieres of his works, beginning in 1968 with “Famine,” about the Irish famine of the mid-1800s.

“Tom was ever daring,” the theater said in a tribute on its website, “pushing the boundaries of Irish theater and challenging us with disturbing images of Irish life.”

Ms. Hynes, of Druid Theater, said she and Mr. Murphy had long talked about collaborating, since her theater was in the county of Mr. Murphy’s birth. In 1983 he became Druid’s writer in residence.

Over the years both Druid and the Abbey helped advance the slow-growing appreciation of Mr. Murphy internationally by touring their productions of his plays. One example was “DruidMurphy — Plays by Tom Murphy,” a three-play cycle Druid brought to the Lincoln Center Festival in New York in 2012.

Three of Mr. Murphy’s most acclaimed plays came in quick succession in the 1980s: “The Gigli Concert” (1983), about a self-help therapist and an Irishman he tries to teach to sing; “Conversations on a Homecoming” (1985), one of the three works (along with “Famine” and “A Whistle in the Dark”) in the “DruidMurphy” triptych; and “Bailegangaire” (1985), written for the actress Siobhan McKenna, about a senile woman who keeps trying to tell a story that she never quite completes.

His plays were not the types of lyrical works that trafficked in what one article called “the myth of a rural Irish utopia.” Their dark themes, though, were often rendered amid a fair amount of humor, and they featured Mr. Murphy’s own brand of lyricism — dialogue that a fellow playwright, Billy Roche, described as “a language of the inarticulate.”

It was written very specifically onto the page; actors prone to improvisation need not apply. “If Tom has written three dots after a line, it means something different than if he has written two dots, or a comma, or whatever,” Ms. Hynes said in a video made for the Lincoln Center Festival. “He’s like a conductor on a piece of music: You absolutely have to obey the score and achieve your understanding of the text through the music of the piece as much as through your brain.”

The comparison to music was one that Mr. Murphy, who was said to have a fine tenor singing voice, employed himself.

“I’m not jealous of any playwright,” he once said, “but I’m jealous of composers. When I hear music, I hear emotion.”

Ms. Brennan, who appeared in a number of Mr. Murphy’s plays, said Tennessee Williams was among Mr. Murphy’s influences. And Mr. Murphy in turn influenced a younger generation of Irish playwrights who have explored uncomfortable themes with Murphy-like fearlessness.

Mr. Murphy, who at his death lived in Dublin, married Mary Hippisley in the 1960s; their marriage ended in the early 1980s. His relationship with Ms. Brennan dates back more

than three decades, and they married four years ago. He is also survived by three children from his first marriage, Bennan, Nell and Johnny Murphy; and a granddaughter.

Ms. Hynes said that actors coming to Mr. Murphy's plays for the first time could be startled by his insistence that they adhere so precisely to the text.

But they would generally come around, she said.

"It was incredibly demanding but had incredible security," she said. "By obeying the rules you were freer, because he had done the work for you."

Obituary Credit:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/obituaries/tom-murphy-acclaimed-irish-playwright-is-dead-at-83.html?hpw&rref=obituaries&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=well-region®ion=bottom-well&WT.nav=bottom-well>

A note from Martin Oaks Cemetery & Crematory:

We will miss the lyrical voice of this super talented playwright.