Tony Kushner (born July 16, 1956) is an award-winning American playwright most famous for his play Angels in America, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. He is also co-author of, along with Eric Roth, the screenplay of the 2005 film Munich, which was directed by Steven Spielberg and earned Kushner (along with Roth) an Academy Award nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay.

He was born to a Jewish family in Manhattan. His parents, William Kushner and Sylvia (Deutscher) Kushner, both classically trained musicians, moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, the seat of Calcasieu Parish, shortly after his birth. During high school Kushner had a reputation in policy debate, at one point going to a camp, and making it to the final rounds. Kushner moved to New York in 1974 to begin his undergraduate college education at Columbia University, where he completed a B.A. in Medieval Studies in 1978. He studied directing at New York University’s Graduate School, from which he was graduated in 1984.

Kushner’s plays include Hydriotaphia, Slaves! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness, A Bright Room Called Day, Homebody/Kabul, and the book for the musical Caroline, or Change. His new translation of Bertolt Brecht’s Mother Courage and Her Children was performed at the Delacorte Theater in the summer of 2006 starring Meryl Streep and directed by George C. Wolfe. Kushner has also adapted S. Ansky’s play The Dybbuk.

In January 2006, a documentary feature about Kushner entitled Wrestling With Angels debuted at the Sundance Film Festival. The film was directed by Freida Lee Mock.

In April 2008, Kushner and his long-time partner, Entertainment Weekly editor Mark Harris, had a wedding ceremony in New York.

Kushner’s plays are published by TCG and Broadway Play Publishing Inc.

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### Controversy over views on Israel and Zionism

In an interview with the Jewish Independent, Kushner insisted that “I want the state of Israel to continue to exist. I’ve always said that. I’ve never said anything else. My positions have been lied about and misrepresented in so many ways. People claim that I’m for a one-state solution, which is not true.” However, he later stated that he hopes that “there might be a merging of the two countries because [they’re] geographically kind of ridiculous looking on a map,” although he acknowledged that political realities make this unlikely in the near future.

Kushner's anti-Zionism has created some controversy in the Jewish community, including some opposition to his receiving an honorary doctorate at the 2006 commencement of Brandeis University. The Zionist Organization of America unsuccessfully lobbied for the university to rescind its invitation to Kushner. In the course of the controversy, quotes critical of Zionism and Israel made by Kushner were circulated. Kushner said at the time that his quotes were “grossly mischaracterized.” Kushner told the Jewish Advocate in an interview “All that anybody seems to be reading is a couple of right-wing Web sites taking things deliberately out of context and excluding anything that would complicate the picture by making me seem like a reasonable person, which I basically think I am.”

References

[1]: Kushner and his long-time partner, Entertainment Weekly editor Mark Harris, had a wedding ceremony in New York.
[2]: Kushner’s anti-Zionism has created some controversy in the Jewish community, including some opposition to his receiving an honorary doctorate at the 2006 commencement of Brandeis University.
[3]: The Zionist Organization of America unsuccessfully lobbied for the university to rescind its invitation to Kushner.
[4]: In the course of the controversy, quotes critical of Zionism and Israel made by Kushner were circulated.
[5]: Kushner said at the time that his quotes were “grossly mischaracterized.”
[6]: Kushner told the Jewish Advocate in an interview “All that anybody seems to be reading is a couple of right-wing Web sites taking things deliberately out of context and excluding anything that would complicate the picture by making me seem like a reasonable person, which I basically think I am.”
On the issue of Israel, Kushner has stated that:

"there's a very strong democratic tradition in Israel – a secular, pluralist, democratic tradition in Israel. I believe that there's a great deal of jurisprudence and legislative history and executive action in Israel that supports a vision of Israel as a progressive, democratic, secular, pluralist state. I don't know how you reconcile that with the notion of Israel as a Jewish state and that's always been a question that I've had about it, but I leave that to Israel to work out. I believe that there are a lot of people in Israel who absolutely want to see the country equally enfranchise its Jewish citizens and its non-Jewish citizens, its Arab citizens, and I would hope that would be an ongoing struggle that resolves itself in the direction of pluralist, constitutional democracy; a secular, pluralist, constitutional democracy. And there's good reason to hope for that and I think that needs to be supported."[6]

Works

Plays

- La Fin de la Balaie: An Opera for the Apocalypse, New York, Ohio Theatre, 1983.
- Stella (adapted from the play by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe), produced in New York City, 1987.
- The Heavenly Theatre, produced at New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, 1986.
- Hydriotaphia, produced in New York City, 1987 (based on the life on Sir Thomas Browne).
- In That Day (Lives of the Prophets), New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, 1989.
- Slavs! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness Theatre Communications Group, 1995.
- A Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds (adapted from Joachim Neugroschel's translation of the original play by S. Ansky; produced in New York City at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 1997), Theatre Communications Group, 1997.
- The Good Person of Szechuan (adapted from the original play by Bertolt Brecht), Arcade, 1997.
- Henry Box Brown, or the Mirror of Slavery, performed at the Royal National Theatre, London, 1998.
- Caroline, or Change (musical), first performed in New York at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 2002.
- (Director)Ellen McLaughlin, Helen, produced at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 2002.
- Only We Who Guard The Mystery Shall Be Unhappy, 2003.

Books

- Thinking about the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer, Theatre Communications Group (New York, NY), 1995.
- Plays by Tony Kushner (New York: Broadway Play Publishing, 1999). Includes:
  - A Bright Room called Day
  - The Illusion
Other Awards

- Tony Award
- Golden Globe Award
- Emmy Award

Awards and nominations

Academy Award
- Nominated: Best Adapted Screenplay, Munich (2005)

Emmy Award
- Won: Outstanding Writing for a Miniseries, Movie or a Dramatic Special, Angels in America (2004)

Golden Globe Award
- Nominated: Best Screenplay, Munich (2005)

Tony Award
- Won: Best Author of a Play, Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (1993)
- Won: Best Author of a Play, Angels in America: Perestroika (1994)
- Nominated: Best Book of a Musical, Caroline, or Change (2004)
- Nominated: Best Score, Caroline, or Change (2004)

Other Awards
- Pulitzer Prize for Drama
- Evening Standard Award
- Olivier Award Winner - Best New Musical - Caroline, or Change, 2007
- OBIE
- New York Drama Critics Circle Award
- American Academy of Arts and Letters Award
- Whiting Writers Fellowship
- Lily Wallace/Reader's Digest Fellowship
- National Foundation of Jewish Culture, Cultural Achievement award
- Honorary Doctor of Letters from Pace University on May 25, 2004
- Honorary Degree from Brandeis University on May 21, 2006

Magazine contributions

- "Notes About Political Theater," Kenyon Review, 19 (Summer/Fall 1997): 19-34.
- "Fo's Last Laugh--I," Nation, 3 November 1997: 4-5.
- "Matthew's Passion,"[1] Nation, 3 November 1998
- "A Word to Graduates: Organize!," Nation, 1 July 2002.
- "Only We Who Guard The Mystery Shall Be Unhappy," Nation, 24 March 2003.

Other works

- La Fin de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse (opera) 1983
- Brundibar, (an opera in collaboration with Maurice Sendak) 1978-1981
- Munich, a film by Steven Spielberg (2005) - screenplay (co-written by)

Interviews


Career

- Governor's Program for Gifted Children, Lake Charles, LA, Drama Teacher, Director, Playwright, 1978-1981
- United Nations Plaza Hotel, New York City, switchboard operator, 1979-85
- St. Louis Repertory Theatre, assistant director, 1985-86
- New York Theatre Workshop, artistic director, 1987-88
- Theatre Communication Group, New York City, director of literary services, 1990-91
- Juilliard School of Drama, New York City, playwright-in-residence, 1990-92
- Guest artist at New York University Graduate Theatre Program, Yale University, and Princeton University, beginning in 1989.

Awards and nominations
Further reading

- Contemporary Literary Criticism, Gale (Detroit), Volume 81, 1994.

External links

- Film Site for Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner. A Documentary Film by Academy Award winner Freida Lee Mock
- Review of Caroline, or Change at the national theatre
- Bio at Steven Barclay Agency
- Author interview in Guernica Magazine (Guernicamag.com)
- Comedy on the Bridge and Brundibar, a collaboration with Maurice Sendak
- Caroline, or Change in Washington, DC
- AfterElton.com Interview with Tony Kushner (10/06)
- Production: Caroline or Change Working in the Theatre video at American Theatre Wing, 2004

References

1. PBS

Results from FactBites:

Tony Kushner Collection (485 words)

- Tony Kushner was born in Manhattan and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana, the son of professional musicians.
- Kushner is the recipient of grants from the New York Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, a 1990 Whiting Foundation Writer's Award, and an Arts Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, among others.
- Tony Kushner, the son of William and the late Sylvia Kushner was born in New York but graduated from Lake Charles High School.

Tony Kushner - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (1306 words)

- Tony Kushner (born July 16, 1956) is an award-winning American playwright most famous for his play Angels in America, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.
- He was born to a Jewish family in Manhattan, but his parents, William Kushner and Sylvia (Deutscher) Kushner, both classically trained musicians, moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, the seat of Calcasieu Parish, shortly after his birth.
- Kushner moved to New York in 1974 to begin his undergraduate college education at Columbia University, where he completed a B.A. in English literature in 1978.

More results at FactBites »